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Idea for Creating a C.I.A. Grew Out of Pearl Harbor

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 25—American political and military leaders created the Central Intelligence Agency after World War II as a needed instrument of global power.

The concept had its origin in the failure of American intelligence services to coordinate signals warning of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. As early as 1944, Gen. William J. Donovan, chief of the wartime Office of Strategic Services, proposed establishment of an agency to centralize intelligence efforts.

Yet the real impetus came from the decision of President Truman in 1946 that the United States must shoulder new responsibility as a major world power and should counter what was seen to be a menacing expansionist challenge by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Truman established a National Intelligence Authority in 1946 and, under it, a Central Intelligence Group—the forerunner of the C.I.A. But genuine centralization of United States intelligence was still years away.

The Central Intelligence Agency was formally chartered under the National Security Act of 1947.

The United States was already engaged in sporadic undercover political operations against Communist forces at the time in Germany, Greece and Italy. But the operations were initially conducted from the Department of State under Frank G. Wisner, a former O.S.S. officer.

'Commitment' Becomes Clear

"Until 1950 nothing much was accomplished," Ray S. Cline, a retired C.I.A. official, recalled. "It was sort of a floundering period." But Mr. Cline, who served as C.I.A.'s Deputy Director of Intelligence from 1962 to 1964, acknowledged that the agency "developed a commitment to political operations" overseas at the

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By early 1951 the C.I.A. had acquired a manpower of about 5,000 and its influence was rapidly spreading around the world and through the Washington bureaucracy. It was a period of adventurism and of some embarrassing defeats.

Together with Britain's secret intelligence service, the C.I.A. began a series of small invasions of Albania—by sea and by air — in the expectation of sparking an overthrow of the Communist leadership in Tirana. Nearly all of the invaders were captured.

Soon the agency was supervising the operations of another anti-Communist force—11,000 Chinese Nationalist troops—on the eastern frontier of Burma. The C.I.A. was also parachuting spies onto the Chinese mainland and the Ukraine to make contact with other anti-Communists.

In Western countries, mainly in Italy, France and Germany, the C.I.A. was secretly sponsoring scores of anti-Communist political parties, newspapers, radio stations, trade unions and even student groups.

The double aim was, in the words of an old C.I.A. man, "to prevent Communist takeovers, such as occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and where possible to push the Communists back."

Efforts Are Merged

But grave shortcomings had emerged in the C.I.A. attempt to conduct the clandestine collection of intelligence separately from activist political operations. "They tended to cross each other up," said an agency veteran.

To eliminate rivalries, Walter Bedell Smith, the director from 1950 to 1953, merged the clandestine collection operations with the covert operations. Mr. Wisner was brought over from the State Department. This was the birth of what the C.I.A. called its clandestine services.

In addition, Mr. Smith and his deputy, Allen W. Dulles, placed new emphasis on the analysis of intelligence and on longer range estimates of enemy potential. Mr. Smith inaugurated an Office of National Estimates under the Harvard historian, William Langer.

The office soon became the apex of the intelligence community, a group of 10 seasoned military men and academics whose job was to sift through masses of intelligence data and make detached judgments on major foreign developments in terms of the national interest.

In the nineteen-fifties, the C.I.A. also developed large-scale intelligence service industries, both in purely technical fields and in social-political enterprises.

Dummy Groups Set Up

It financed establishment of two huge radio stations—Radio Free Europe for broadcasts to East Europe and Radio Liberation (later Radio Liberty) for powerful transmissions to the Soviet Union. It set up dummy foundations, dummy companies, dummy public relations firms and dummy airlines. It placed agents in American student organizations and trade unions—all with a view to assist in penetrating foreign countries.

On the technical side, the C.I.A. sponsored development of a whole range of reconnaissance and monitoring equipment, among which was the high altitude U-2 spy plane. Starting in 1956, the U-2s ranged with impunity over the Soviet Union, China and later Vietnam and Cuba bringing back telltale photographs of missile sites and other military installations.

When Mr. Dulles succeeded Mr. Smith as Director, he persuaded President Eisenhower to accept the C.I.A. as a national service reporting directly to the White House, with its estimates being considered essential elements of the policy-making process.

It was the U-2, however, that caused Mr. Eisenhower one of his greatest embarassments. One of the spy planes was shot down over the SSoviet Union in 1960 on the eve of the President's intended summit meeting with the Soviet Union's Nikita Khrushchev. The Administration at first denied that the craft was a spy plane, and then President Eisenhower acknowledged that it was and accepted responsibility for the flight. That was the beginning of an unmasking of dozens of C.I.A. operations that had been conducted more or less in secrecy —including the 1954 toppling of a Communist - oriented government in Guatemala.

Defect Disclosed

The militant anti-Communist motivation of the United States Government continued undiminished into the Kennedy Administration, which allowed the C.I.A.-managed invasion of Cuba to go ahead in April, 1961.

Its total failure revealed a serious defect in the C.I.A. structure—the men responsible for analyzing and estimating intelligence were kept in ignorance of plans for covert operations like the abortive Bay of Pigs landings.

This was remedied under the new Director, John A. McCone, who saw to it that the analysts and estimators were consulted about covert political actions.

But the Cuba invasion disclosed another disturbing trend in United States policy-making: the tendency to allow relatively modest undercover intelligence operations to balloon into large military actions.

It went that way in Indochina, from Vietnam to Laos and Cambodia, and the C.I.A. bore most of the public blame.

"The C.I.A. should have been doing rifle-shot operations, not full scale military operations," Mr. Cline observed ruefully. Still, he recalled the McCone years from 1962 to 1966 as "a period of peak performance" by the C.I.A.

There were C.I.A. voices then, among the analysts, warning against a deeper American involvement in the Indochina conflict. But President Johnson listened less and less to them and more and more to his military advisers.

A decline in the C.I.A.'s access to the White House set in, and its role in policy formation continued to wane under President Nixon. The agency's product remained much the same. But its customer had changed.

President Johnson simply did not like the gloomy assessment of the Vietnam war outlook given him by the agency. President Nixon was determined to end involvement of United States forces in the Indochina conflict and did so through consultations with the parties involved rather than with his intelligence advisers.